



Aruba's Island Wide Clean-up began with an extra effort from Playa Pabao

This past Sunday began a month long campaign to clean up Aruba that is a partnership of the AHATA Environmental Committee and SERLIMAR, the island's waste disposal service. Working in cooperation with EcoTech, Daltra, and Mourik, N.V., the suppliers of dumpsters to the island, they instigated a program called "Esaki ta mi Bario," or "This is my neighborhood."

The residents of three designated areas had dumpsters placed strategically, which would accept refuse from residents from the hours of 8:00 AM until 1:30 PM, and all were encouraged to clean out their yards and homes and get rid of their waste for no charge.

Community leaders and residents housed around the Centro di Bario Playa Pabao, which is located behind the big supermarket area close to Oranjestad, decided to take this opportunity to not only clean up their yards, but the surrounding neighborhood as well. They encouraged all the community in this effort, and vendors from the area supplied garbage bags, snacks and refreshments, and from Pricesmart they received gloves to protect the hands and from Martijn Trading, surgical masks to protect their airways.

Organizers are very pleased with the effort, and in particular offer thanks to the administration and students of the Xavier University School of Medicine who made up the bulk of the volunteers cleaning the streets, along with students from the Aruba Institute of Higher Learning under Jason Margarita. "Without the participation of the students this effort would not have been nearly as successful as it was," reports organizer Rosalie Klein. Head of the center, Dennis Burke, also wishes to express a special thanks to the students and teachers of XUSOM, and the Aruba Institute, who single-handedly cleaned the Arendstraat, the Belgiëstraat and the Driemeisterstraat, including the play park that was placed there in the past year.

As people came to dispose of their refuse, they and their trucks were recruited, and some answered the call with fervor, such as Martin Simon, devoting their entire day to cleaning areas around the community. Though originally allotted only two dumpsters by the ministry of Health and Environment, when Michael Paesch of EcoTech saw what was taking place, he called the home office to supply the center with all the dumpsters they needed, and by 2:00 PM, the community had filled ten dumpsters to the brim. Not content to only clean up, but with an eye towards prevention, the organizers requested David Smith of Valero Refinery Aruba to arrange for discarded 55-gallon drums to be delivered to the center so residents could be sure to have sufficient bins for their waste. Valero management was happy to comply and forty bins were delivered to be placed where needed. Another forty will be delivered again this coming Saturday, September 24 for those that need them, and Valero offers them to any other barrios that could use them.

Keeping Aruba clean is a community effort, people may feel it is the job of the government, but it is not the government that is dumping illegally or not disposing of their trash properly. Organizers of the Playa Pabao clean up effort particularly wish to thank Ling & Son's, Super Foods, Kong Hing Wholesale, Cleanmaster, and Tropical Bottling for providing garbage bags and refreshments for the volunteers. It was a long, hot day of effort, but well worth it, "and only a start," reminds organizers. "Keeping the island and neighborhoods clean is an everyday effort, important for the health and welfare of the residents, and our children."